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INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING  
AMEMBASSY BERN  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ULAANBAATAR 000257

STATE FOR EAP/CM AND INR/EAP

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADORSHIPS AND POLITICS IN MONGOLIA

Classified By: Political Counselor Andrew K. Covington, Reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Mongolia has 33 diplomatic missions worldwide, and many key ambassadorships are coming vacant at the start of the Elbegdorj presidency. The handling of these appointments provides significant insight into political maneuvering in Mongolia. Financial, ethnic, religious, social, and political considerations are all in play. Here we examine the appointments to several key posts, including Moscow, Beijing, Geneva, Stockholm, Kuwait, and Sofia. End Summary.

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THE AMBASSADORIAL APPOINTMENT PROCESS  
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¶2. (SBU) Ambassadors are appointed to three-year terms. When a position becomes vacant, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) makes an initial suggestion to the president regarding who might fill the vacancy. The president may accept this recommendation or may nominate another candidate. In either case, the president submits a name to Parliament's Standing Committee (SC) on Security and Foreign Policy, which must approve the nomination and send it forward to a plenary session for simple-majority approval. The SC chair has the power to delay or hold these nominations, and as such is a key player. The current chair of the Security and Foreign Policy Standing Committee is Z. Enkhbold, a DP member close to Elbegdorj.

¶3. (C) Although the president has the power to recall ambassadors before their terms are complete, in practice this is not done without a compelling argument, since such a recall might invoke the wrath of Parliament, of which Prime Minister Bayar's Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) has a majority of seats. Such a scenario might destabilize the MPRP-DP coalition government, which Elbegdorj initially opposed last fall but now acknowledges as necessary in this time of fiscal and economic crisis. Moreover, a presidential recall of an ambassador might invite the MPRP-controlled Parliament to vote down Elbegdorj's replacement for that position.

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CASE STUDY ONE: MOSCOW  
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¶4. (C) The new ambassador to Russia is D. Idevkhiten, a former MP who lost his seat in 2008 and who is associated with former President Enkhbayar (MPRP). Idevkhiten's appointment is testimony to the lingering influence Enkhbayar has in Mongolian politics. Enkhbayar is widely expected to run for a vacant seat in Parliament in a by-election on October 18; the MPRP will nominate its candidate on September ¶25.

15. (C) Elbegdorj's willingness to appoint Enkhbayar's associate to this key position indicates a shrewd balancing of the president's interactions with factions of the MPRP: Former President Enkhbayar and Prime Minister Bayar are known to dislike one another and to compete for influence within the MPRP. Bayar is a former ambassador to Russia, and as such would have preferred one of his own to fill this position. However, Elbegdorj apparently would rather not see the current PM's considerable power augmented in this way. Instead, in this instance Elbegdorj has supported the Enkhbayar faction, which is still reeling from Enkhbayar's loss of the presidency to Elbegdorj.

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CASE STUDY TWO: GENEVA  
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16. (C) Elbegdorj has appointed the former foreign policy advisor to Enkhbayar, L. Orgil, to head the mission in Geneva. This is another instance of keeping Bayar's supporters mostly out of the diplomatic equation while also claiming bipartisan handling of diplomatic appointments. Orgil is not a member of the MPRP, but he and Enkhbayar are ethnic Buriats with family connections to Khentii Province.

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CASE STUDY THREE: STOCKHOLM  
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17. (C) Former MPRP bureaucrat B. Enkhmandakh is now the ambassador to Sweden. Enkhmandakh is an Enkhbayar loyalist whom many Enkhbayar opponents accuse of taking exclusive blame for an incident several years ago involving alleged bribes from Macanese casinos, thereby keeping Enkhbayar out of trouble. Regardless of the accuracy of these accusations, Enkhbayar likely assisted Enkhmandakh after the latter's release from prison, eventually helping Enkhmandakh to become a political attache at the embassy in London and, in a dramatic career jump immediately thereafter, Vice Foreign Minister in 2007. (Note: Vice Minister positions are largely ceremonial, generally lucrative, and were nearly eliminated prior to the formation in 2008 of the coalition government, which necessitated more plum positions to hand out. End Note.)

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CASE STUDY FOUR: SOFIA  
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18. (C) Unfortunately for Enkhbayar, Elbegdorj's goodwill ends with Moscow, Geneva, and Stockholm. Recall there is a strong possibility that Enkhbayar will run for a seat in Parliament in October. This seat is located in the DP-leaning Chingeltei District of Ulaanbaatar; Elbegdorj vacated the seat in June upon his inauguration. Earlier this summer, the politically shrewd Civil Will Party (CWP) leader, Oyun (an MP and former FM), suggested that her party would also run a candidate in the October by-election, thereby pulling votes from the DP. She indicated the candidate would likely be the party's deputy chair, Ts. Gankhuyag. Such a scenario would obviously benefit the MPRP.

19. (C) Soon after Oyun's announcement, Gankhuyag found himself nominated ambassador to Bulgaria. In this way, Oyun's party gets an ambassadorship from the DP in return for not putting forth a candidate in October. The CWP also refrained from running a candidate in the closely contested presidential election in May that put President Elbegdorj in office, so we can expect to see DP gratitude toward the CWP (and the Greens, for the same reason) for some time. Gankhuyag is no Russophile, having inquired with poloff earlier this year about uranium cooperation prospects with the United States.

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CASE STUDY FIVE: KUWAIT  
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¶10. (C) The appointment of K. Sairaan as ambassador to Kuwait is the most curious case examined here. Sairaan is a former career diplomat (previously ambassador to Egypt) and an ethnic Kazakh Muslim from Bayan-Olgii Province who left the MFAT to become an MP for the Democratic Party in 2004. In 2008, Elbegdorj refused to allow Sairaan to run again, so Sairaan did so as an independent and lost. This estrangement from the DP led him to become the investment policy advisor to PM Bayar. Despite there being little love lost between Elbegdorj and Sairaan, the president has tapped him as envoy to Kuwait in recognition of Sairaan's extensive influence in the Muslim world. The most illustrative example of this influence is Sairaan's engagement with the Kuwaiti leadership during his time as an MP to obtain \$12 million to build a new complex for the Mongolian Parliament. (Note: Although the money came to Mongolia, a building site has not yet been identified and no one can say exactly where the funds now are. End Note.)

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CASE STUDY SIX: BEIJING  
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¶11. (C) Of course, Elbegdorj can be expected to nominate some of his own top people to ambassadorships. In the case of Beijing, the president tapped his foreign policy advisor, Ts. Sukhbaatar, for the appointment. His previous position was as International Secretary for the DP, and he earlier served as ambassador to the United Kingdom. Sukhbaatar has not yet departed for Beijing. (Biographical note: His wife, Oyunchimeg, is the deputy chief of the Mongolian Customs Office. End note.)

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THE CAREER DIPLOMATS  
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¶12. (SBU) Yes, career diplomats also have a place in this equation. Elbegdorj has tapped Kh. Ayurzana, the Director of the Neighboring Countries Department at MFAT, to head the mission to Mongolia's almost-neighbor, Kazakhstan. (Note: The population of Bayan-Olgii, the westernmost province of Mongolia, is 90 percent Kazakh. End Note.) T. Zalaa-Uul, formerly a counselor at the MFAT, is heading to Ottawa, which is a key relationship due to significant mining investments in Mongolia by Canadian companies. B. Davaadorj, who was the advisor to the ambassador in Berlin, has been elevated to the top job there. Germany is Mongolia's most significant Western European relationship and boasts robust cultural and commercial ties. None of these career diplomats is known to have notable political leanings.

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